

Our Changed Winter Landscape

The thirtieth of April has arrived. We're on the brink of a new reality they keep hurriedly updating to include those endless exceptions. Outside, these shadows that fallen leaves paint momentarily on my wooden deck - are longer, thinner and more ash-grey than the stark black tattoos of summer. Sun's faded face in these unfolding months, mutes any scorching or damage it might do. Heaps of leaves, that would normally be swept away and dispatched into black bags and beyond, without my even knowing, lie scattered in growing stacks. They clutch at winter's sun, in ways that make their crinkled deadness come to life. Ants, and other insects, have created trails and passages through these heaps of faded ochre and bleached red leaves, paths they were never given time to build before. I feel like a suspended spirit, that watches an emergent landscape being crafted under my feet. I walk more carefully now that I've seen these intricate routes.

Leaves and blanched pine needles have grown into simulated peaks and prominences - which then descend into rustling slopes and valleys. The ordinary around me has rebirthed itself, leaving me with no inclination to sweep it away. We as humans invented tidiness, the pristine and sculpted, which we kept trying to impose on nature. This winter I want to watch how my deck micro-environment, combines what's dead and crinkled, with muted sunlight - to create the unforgettable, like an inspired sculptor. The inside of my house has begun to echo this, with wrinkles and ruffles in carpets and rugs - that were once smoothed away by the dictates of cleanliness. The dulled tang of lemon floor wash liquid, has become blended with heaps of dented couch cushions, to create smells that massage rather than assault my nose. My slowly fading curtains, hang like the well-worn jacket I promised to dry-clean at the end of last winter, but never got to. Who knows if I ever will now.